

A2 GCE

Humanities

G104

Unit G104: Interdisciplinary Skills Research Enquiry

Guidance for Candidates

This document provides guidance for candidates with possible areas of study for a research enquiry.

There is also a guidance document provided for teachers:

- **Guidance for Teachers:** provides guidance for teachers in deciding whether an enquiry question is suitable

Introduction

Unit 4, the Interdisciplinary Skills Research Enquiry requires you to produce two documents; the research enquiry itself and a research log.

The enquiry, which will address a topic and question that you have chosen and which should be unique to you, is the major body of work and should not exceed **3000 words**. Guidance on possible study areas from which you could derive a research question is given below. It is important that you choose a study area and question which is of interest to you and which will provide sufficient scope for you to carry out independent research and reach meaningful conclusions. There will be provision in your unit 4 course for you to learn what form the enquiry should take (i.e. structure, format, methodology etc).

The research log must be compiled as the enquiry progresses (**not** as a retrospective) and will form an assessable record and narrative of your progress in the following:

- setting up your enquiry
- the question it will address
- determining your methodology
- gathering evidence
- recording issues which arise (e.g. problems you encounter and how they are tackled)
- commenting on the outcome of your work.

It should not exceed **1000 words**. Again, you will receive training as part of your course on suitable structures, formats and content.

Possible study areas for a research enquiry

The choice of suitable research enquiry question is a crucial decision. The following areas of study are exemplars only and not an exhaustive list. You can use them as a starting point for thinking about what question you would like to research. Either a current or an historical perspective can be taken on most of these areas.

- The influence of a particular individual or group in the local area/region/nationally/internationally – benefactor, large scale employer, religious leader, artist, musician, champion of workers' rights.
- Transport and communication – historical and current e.g. development of rail/road/canal network; transport schemes such as bypasses, major road construction, rail links, airport expansions, port developments; changes in local transport services (rural/urban); development of local communication infrastructure e.g. broadband in rural areas.
- Provision of public services – funding for programmes, school building/closures, local service initiatives, centralisation or decentralisation of functions, third sector provision, historical examples e.g. large scale workhouses in local area.
- Crime and deviance – increases or decreases, effects of police initiatives, changes in practice (current or historically), trends over time, changing perspectives over time, effect of publicity and media on public opinion.

- Energy and raw materials production – exploitation of natural resources e.g. coal, iron, stone; power station schemes, wind farms; local/national initiatives on energy conservation, increasing cost of energy, changes to lifestyle.
- Environmental issues – pollution events, waste management, floods, meteorological activity, drainage and irrigation, rising sea levels, deposition and erosion.
- Employment – developments in industry, migrant workers, closures in industry, migration to new industry, changes in gender employment patterns, historical decline of child labour.
- Migration and demographic trends – migrant workers, rural depopulation / urbanisation (historically and currently), deserted medieval villages, formation of dormitory towns/villages, holiday homes, effects of disease, plagues, epidemics e.g. Black Death, effects of wartime losses e.g. World War I effect on small communities.
- Cultural issues – changes resulting from increasing/decreasing influence of religions, ethnic groups, cultures, artistic movements, changes in traditional lifestyles, outlooks, attitudes as a result of external influences.
- NIMBY issues in general which galvanise communities into action and any lasting effects e.g. on social cohesion/divisions.

Plagiarism and acknowledging the work of others

Plagiarism is consciously or unconsciously passing off the work of others as your own. In practice, you are likely to be guilty of plagiarism if you fail to note the origin of any material which is not your own original work. This does not mean that material you derive from research cannot be used in your work, only that you must say where it has come from and who the original author was.

It is therefore important that, where your enquiry is dependent on the work of others, you acknowledge the fact through a bibliography and, where appropriate, within the text or as a footnote. It is **your** responsibility to avoid plagiarism and to take steps to ensure that all external content is carefully recorded and acknowledged.

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Deciding whether an enquiry question is suitable

There are four key questions which define whether an enquiry question is suitable:

1. Is there a sufficient range of evidence available to research the question effectively and come to an evidenced conclusion?
2. Does the question lend itself to an interdisciplinary approach?
3. Does the question allow the candidate to access all the assessment criteria at the highest levels?
4. How does it need to be placed within a broader context?

Applying these questions to a particular enquiry: Example of an enquiry with a present-day regional focus

Proposed research enquiry question: What effects have migrant workers had on life in Lincolnshire?

1. Is there a sufficient range of evidence available?

Sources of evidence could include:

Primary: population statistics, demographic trends, analysis of economic trends in area, surveys of local people and of workers, evidence for changes in local economy, changes in types of businesses, social and cultural impact, data from local authorities of changing needs, physical evidence of change e.g. new housing, changes in local attitudes e.g. worship at local church in different languages

Secondary: interpretations of effect of worker influx e.g. newspaper reports, outcomes of research studies

There is a wide range of potential evidence available.

2. Does the enquiry lend itself to an interdisciplinary approach?

The following disciplines could provide approaches which would address this question:

- Geography (analysis of demographic and population trends and statistics, changing settlement patterns)
- Economics (impact on local businesses, economic trends and reasons for migrant workers)
- Sociology (changes in family structures in area, effect on local community)
- History (origins and history of migrant workers in area)
- Politics/law (impact of changes to legislation e.g. EU freedom of movement).

The question can bring in a range of disciplines within an integrated interdisciplinary approach.

3. Does the question allow access to the highest levels of the assessment criteria?

AO2

- Question offers ample scope for applying knowledge and understanding of history/human geography/sociology/economics/politics.

AO3

- Question offers scope for selecting and analysing a wide range of both primary and secondary sources, all easily accessible, but still provides opportunities for independent research.
- Potential range of resources offers tremendous scope for both evaluating and interpreting evidence, some of it highly polemical, so opportunities for evaluating reliability and credibility.
- The question lends itself to an interdisciplinary approach.
- There is likely to be sufficient evidence to support any conclusions.

4. How does it need to be placed within a broader context?

The context can be broadened to European and international trends in migration.

This is a good choice of question as it offers so much potential in content terms and also for demonstrating the required enquiry skills.

Applying these questions to a particular enquiry: Example of a historically focussed local enquiry

Proposed research enquiry question: What effect did the building of Arkwright's Mill in Cromford in Derbyshire have on the local area?

1. Is there a sufficient range of evidence available?

Sources of evidence could include:

Primary sources: contemporary accounts, journals, local archives, population/demographic information, data on public health/ disease/mortality, physical traces in the landscape, comparison with data from industrial cities e.g. Manchester, churchyard surveys, Parish records, data re poverty and levels of employment, statistics on levels of education, surveys of current attitudes to industrial heritage, interviews with local people re enduring impact on area.

Secondary sources: histories of local area, interpretations of Arkwright's significance in the history of the Industrial Revolution.

There is a wide range of potential evidence available.

2. Does the enquiry lend itself to an interdisciplinary approach?

The following disciplines could provide approaches which would address this question:

- History (source analysis of local archives, contemporary accounts, secondary evidence re importance of Arkwright)
- Economics (economic data on past economic trends, patterns of employment)
- Geography (trends in population and historical settlement patterns, development of local settlements)
- Sociology (surveys on levels of poverty/affluence)
- Law (changes in legislative frameworks during industrial revolution provide context).

The question can bring in a range of disciplines within an integrated interdisciplinary approach.

3. Does the question allow access to the highest levels of the assessment criteria?

AO2

- Question offers ample scope for applying knowledge and understanding of history/human geography/sociology/economics/law.

AO3

- Question offers scope for selecting and analysing a wide range of both primary and secondary sources, all easily accessible, but still provides opportunities for independent research.
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- The question lends itself to an interdisciplinary approach.
- There is likely to be sufficient evidence to support any conclusions.

This is a good choice of question as it offers so much potential in content terms and also for demonstrating required enquiry skills.

4. How does it need to be placed within a broader context?

Context can be broadened to national picture of industrialisation at the time.

Responsibilities of teachers

A chronological list of the stages involved in the production of assessment evidence for the enquiry is given in the specification.

Briefly, these may be summarised as follows:

- providing enquiry skills training for candidates
- providing guidance and discussion on the requirements for the enquiry and research log including providing advice on choosing a suitable topic and question, document structures, planning and research, resolving practical problems (e.g. in data collection) acknowledgements and avoidance of plagiarism
- advising candidates on their review of first drafts
- monitoring progress
- signing off completed enquiries and logs as the candidates' own work (including verification of source acknowledgements)
- marking and moderation (internal) and submission of marks and evidence for external moderation.

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